HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF PALM DESERT, INC.

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

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DEL DAVITT

INTERVIEWED BY

Patricia Young

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INTERVIEWEE: DEL DAVITT

INTERVIEWER: Patricia Young

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TRANSCRIBER: Linda A. Jantzen

Y: This is an interview with Del Davitt for the Historical Society of Palm Desert Oral History Project on July 8, 1980, at eleven o'clock in the morning at his home on Davis Street in Palm Desert.

All right. Let's begin this morning talking about how you came to the desert, what you had been doing previously where you were, how you got into the business that got you into buying the radio station here, or starting one I should say.

D: Well, I was in charge of CBS radio in Hollywood, and of course my favorite hobby was flying. And I was out flying one day on my way from Van Nuys Airport to Phoenix. I saw a little airport, looked at my charts and I couldn't quite figure out where it was. I knew

that I'd passed Palm Springs Airport which was easy to pick out, and I didn't think I got quite as far as Thermal Airport. So I said, well, I'll go down and investigate. I stopped up at the little airport to find out it was Desert Air Hotel, a thing of the past. And I went in and met some lovely people there. Quite a few of them were local people, seemed to be the favorite hangout for the local people. In those days it was known as drive in or fly in. I had such a wonderful time I never did get to Phoenix. And it seems every weekend I started to come down to Desert Air Hotel. And the first thing you know, I became I guess as they call it a desert rat. Fell in love with the desert. Finally resigned my job in Hollywood with CBS radio and moved down to Palm Springs. Decided that this was it. I'd made enough money and I didn't want to work anymore and I was just going to take life easy in Palm Springs. Well, that doesn't seem to happen in my life. Two weeks later I'm working again. They needed a union engineer for a job at Marion Davies Desert Inn to handle a remote for remote broadcast for KFWB in Hollywood. And it had to be a union engineer on it. Since I was the only union engineer in Palm Springs, I was it. I took the job.

Along with engineering I wound up being a disc jockey for them. So I worked Monday through Thursday as a disc jockey and engineer. Then Friday, Saturday and Sunday, the big talent from Hollywood came down and took over the DJ's. Bill Balance and, oh, you could go down the line. Larry Finley was well known in the area at that time. And during my stay at the Desert Inn I met a lovely gal who was operating the Western Airlines office. Of course, you know, I up and get married.

Y: When was this?

D: Don't ask me a lot of questions like that. I don't remember dates.

Y: Fifties?

D: So we lived in Palm Springs for a few years and moved to a place called the Outpost Estates, which I still considered the fringe area of Palm Springs. They had built some new homes out there and we bought one of them. And I went to work for KCMJ as chief engineer. They were expanding their operation from a five hundred watt station to a thousand watt two-tower directional, and they needed somebody with engineering ability, and I seemed to be Johnny-on-the-spot again. So I took that job. And while I was working for KCMJ, my wife had her

first child, Michael, who is now twenty-two years old. So you can figure back a few more years past that, you can figure how long I've been in the desert. And while I was working for KCMJ, the idea came to me, the desert needed another radio station. When you got out to Palm Desert, you couldn't get the Palm Springs stations. And you could just barely get the Indio stations. So I went halfway between the two counties to a little community known as Palm Desert that had a big population of about thirty-five hundred people at that time. And when I applied for an application for radio station, the Federal Communications Commission wrote back and said, we have no record of Palm Desert. Where is it? So the Chamber of Commerce wrote a beautiful letter for me stating that we had a permanent population of at least thirty-five hundred and a first-class post office. So we took it from there. And about ten years later, through many hazardous and trial and error methods, we got a radio station going. I had many problems. One, finding a location. Nobody wanted two antennas near their property. So I did find an area way back in the mountains. And the wild life organization here blocked me on that because they said the blinking lights at night

would disturb the natural living habits of the animals in the area. So we had to cancel again and apply to the FCC for another site. Finally we found way out on Cook Road where the wash goes through. And that was so far out at that time that people figured nobody will ever go out that direction. Now there's homes way out past the radio station. But that was the end of the line. In fact, there was a dirt road really going that far. And it was all below sands so it was as we considered in those days worthless desert. I bought the piece of property from a well-known doctor in our area, Dr. Morrey. And the first thing I had to do was get a bulldozer and learn how to drive it. Having been in the Marines, I had some experience with that. And level the land off. Well, I had to go down about fifteen feet below sand in order to get down to a halfway decent piece of property to level it off enough to get on something that would be solid. And even getting down that far, the Building Department made me put additional footing in around my building. I designed the building and built the building with the help of another man here in the area. We had to put at least another two hundred feet of concrete in that below sand in order to support the building. Well, I'd

spent ten years and quite a bit of money to this point, so I was looking around for a little additional financial help. And Eddie Howard, the orchestra leader, came along and said he'd be interested in going in with me. So he was to buy ten percent of the station. And he decided he had enough of the band business. He decided to put the band away and do a DJ show on the station. In fact, we even set 1:00 P.M. to 2:00 P.M. for the Eddie Howard Show. And some of the oldtime residents would probably remember it never happened because Eddie died six months prior to my getting on the air. So I was back going along on the radio station again. When we finally got it on the air after two and a half years, struggling along, decided to sell the station. And during the time I had it, I featured the big band sounds and the top-name vocalists and played what I considered the good music. The type of music the people of the area would like to have. Finally the station was changed over to a country and western station. Later the call letters were changed from KGOL, which stood for the golden sound in the golden desert in those days which the Chamber of Commerce was building our area, the golden desert. The call letters were changed to KGUY to go with the country

and western music. And, of course, today we know KGUY is an all news station.

Y: You were telling me before that you had a real battle to get those call letters, KGOL.

D: Oh, yes, we did. In fact, I had to go back to Washington, D.C. before the Federal Communications Commission in order to get the call letters because there was a station in Los Angeles, KBIG, which had been on the air for many, many years and is well known, and they had decided to change their call letters to KGOL. It stands for the golden sound in the golden state. And another station, KPOL, and one other station, there were three stations that filed a protest against KBIG because they said, the call letters sound too much like theirs and the type music they were playing sounded too much like theirs. And the protests went to the FCC and a battle took place and I'd say there was probably a six or seven month period that went all the way through to the Supreme Court when the Supreme Court handed down the decision stating that the other stations were in their right, that there was a confliction of interest in it. The sound would be too similar. So when I saw this happen, I immediately applied for the call letters, and the FCC didn't even want to

consider talking to me about it, so I just packed my little suitcase and went back and presented charts to them showing that we had a big mountain range here and that my station would be directional, that the signal would not get into the Los Angeles area, and I won the case and got the call letters, KGOL.

Y: Aside from having the big band sounds, you had an audience participation show?

D: Oh yes, we were the only radio station I guess in the entire desert area that ventured into that. Having worked in Hollywood so long during the era when we had the big radio shows and the ticket lines and the no-ticket lines, I decided to try the same gimmick here. So we made a deal with Desi Arnaz and Hotel. And every Wednesday afternoon, I guess it was from two to three, we put on a live broadcast. In order to go to the broadcast, you had to write in and get tickets. If you didn't have tickets, why then you had to wait until everybody with tickets got in. If there were any seats available, then the no-ticket line could go in. And there was a live show. I went down into the audience and interviewed people. Also we had musicians who would be in the area who would sit in and play with the band.

We had Marty Barris and her band. Her father was the famous Harry Barris who started out with Bing Crosby when it was the Rhythm Boys. And her mother, of course, was Lois Whiteman who was the first lady of song at the Ambassador Hotel in Los Angeles. Marty was a very vivacious redhead who had a wonderful band at the hotel. And her musicians would play for the broadcast. And any other musicians who would be in the area would come in sometimes and sit in with the band or just in for an interview. Had people like Harry James. Ben Pollock used to come out to the broadcast many times. I just can't remember all of the people that was on it. We had quite a few of the big names that would stop in and say hello and how are you and sometimes they would be driving around in their car and would hear the broadcast. And just stop in to say hello because having worked in Hollywood for quite a few years and worked with the big shows, I knew quite a few of the entertainers. Oh, well, there's that old dumb engineer, and stop in and say hi. Of course, Ben Pollock was one of the favorites. He used to come out quite often.

Y: Did you have a lineup for tickets for these shows?

D: Oh yes. It was a sellout every time. I don't recall how

many people we could handle. We had the entire dining area for the broadcast and we used the dance floor then for them to wander around on. And it would be a full house for every broadcast. This went on for one season. Then with the following season, I sold the station.

Y: What hours were you actually on the air?

D: It was a daytime station. We'd operate from sunrise to sunset, which would vary with the season of the year. And of course the time of the year that we wanted to stay on the air the longest, which would be our winter season, we had to go off the air like four forty-five in the afternoon because that would be about sunset in this area. So that was sort of cutting down our operating hours.

Y: And you actually did go off the air?

D: Oh, yes. you have to. That's required by the FCC rules and regulations, sunrise to sunset. However, I believe the rule has been changed and now they allow the daytimers to go on at six in the morning and off at six in the evening. Except in the summertime, with daylight savings time in existence, you can stay on the air until almost eight o'clock in the evening. Of course, in the summer-time in those days there were only about sixty people

left in town.

Y: Can you talk a little about the kind of . . . you were telling me that you were directional.

D: Yes, a directional station means it utilizes more than one antenna. A non-directional station would have one antenna and the signal strength in all directions would be just about equal. When you put up a second antenna, and it has to be spaced and mounted and exact seventy degrees from north or south, it will control the direction of your signal. And when I first applied to the FCC, I had applied for a non-directional station. And a little station down in San Luis, Mexico got an increase in power without my knowing what was happening or without my attorneys knowing. You usually have an attorney who stays on top of all this kind of stuff, and he's usually located in Washington. Well, it slipped through and as a result, I had to go directional or I felt like chucking the whole thing at that point. However, after making a good study of it, I found out by going directional, it worked in my favor because the direction that I had to, as we call it, dump the power, was in the direction of Palm Springs. Now what happens, you take the power that would be going towards Indio and

you push it in the direction of Palm Springs. So the five hundred watt station in Palm Desert, your signal strength into Palm Springs might almost be up to six hundred watts or seven hundred watts and it becomes additive. We had a beautiful signal all the way through to Twenty-nine Palms. While I was doing a DJ show, and I used to do these shows from six in the morning until about nine, I would talk about the Marines occasionally, and I would get phone calls from Marines at Twenty-nine Palms Marine Base, saying, we're listening to the program. How about playing so and so for us. So this was really a good indication of how far we were getting out. Now in the opposite direction, the signal sort of played out at about Coachella. That is, good listening. Anyone could tell it became, you could hear it. You could hear it actually out into the Salt and Sea, but it was with a lot of interference and background. But into Palm Springs, our signal was about as strong as any of the local stations. And into Joshua Tree, it was exceptionally good signal. And into Twenty-nine Palms, then you start getting into the fading area again or overlap from other stations, but it was still good that far.

Y: So you provided competition

D: Oh, definitely so! The type of music that we were playing, I think we captured all the Palm Springs audience because they were playing what they call middle of the road or rock and roll. And it just seemed that people liked the type music that I played. Playing the Russ Morgan, Jan Garber, Freddie Martin and the Frank Sinatra, Doris Day, all the good vocalists, the type of music that the people, the era that I believe lived here in the desert would enjoy, the older tunes. So it was a very popular station. In fact, one of the Palm Springs stations paid for a survey and we came out second in the survey.

Y: Who was first?

D: KDES. Now KDES came out first and, of course, they were on the air longer hours than we were too, but we came out second in the survey. So it was really unbelievable, especially when we didn't pay for it. Usually the station that paid for it came out first every time.

Y: I'm curious. Did you have much audience participation in terms of people calling in, telling you how they felt about the station or requesting songs or anything like that?

D: Constantly. Yes, we had a fantastic audience. People

saying, we're lounging around the pool and we're listening to the station. Would you play so and so. Or we're having a little party over here today. Would you play so and so for so and so. Of course, we'd try to cooperate. Whenever we'd get a call, we wouldn't interrupt our regular programming, but we would try to fit it in. In other words, the whole secret of programming is to have your music so that there was a certain format to it and sort of follow it in sequence. But whenever the request would be of the type of music with the type of beat or the tempo, we would substitute and play it for them without a doubt. And it got so that when the phone would ring at a certain hour of the day, you could almost tell who was calling because some people used to call it every day. (laughter) Would you play "The Impossible Dream." Well, I know who that is. And it was quite interesting. Got to meet a lot of nice people from having phone calls. People would say, hey, why don't you come over; we'd like to meet you or something like that. And it was a friendly little town.

Y: Are we talking about the sixties now when it first went on the air?

D: What?

Y: Are we talking about the 1960s?

D: Yes, it was. Sixty, roughly sixty. Yes.

Y: When it went on the air.

D: Yes, I sort of laughed. I said I sort of put all these things aside since I sold the station. I'm not much for remembering dates to be very honest with you. It was in the sixties because Eddie Howard was actually, roughly about 1961. I think Eddie Howard died May of 1961, so we went on the air just about four or five months after that. In fact, when we went on the air, I guess it was summertime which is a rough time to go on the air because, remember, there weren't many merchants in town in those days. You could name them on both hands, really. Ed Mullen's Palm Desert Pharmacy was one of our best advertisers. He'd buy advertising before we ever got on the air and stayed with us all the way through until the time that I sold the station. And he used to kid sometimes. He'd say, gee, we put a certain product on the air for the special and he'd have to call in after two or three days and say, cancel the ad. We've sold everything out. So that proved that we did have listeners that were faithful because they'd go in and buy the merchandise that they would hear us advertising. And we had one in

Indio, the Indio Furniture Mart. They were with us from the time we went on the air. They used to buy something like fifteen spots a day, which is a lot of advertising. Some people thought that Indio Furniture Mart had an interest in the station they were on the air so much, but they said, you move the merchandise for us. And I think that a lot of selling is how you present it. Is it a fast pitch deal or is there honesty in the person's place or something that's selling it. And I know that we moved the merchandise for the merchants.

Y: Now did you get merchants from Palm Springs as well?

D: Oh, yes. In fact, we had to depend on Indio and Palm Springs to support the station. There weren't enough merchants in Palm Desert. Again, this was a very small town. I guess Ed Mullen's Palm Desert Pharmacy was about the only pharmacy in the town. And then Fireside Pharmacy came in and that was it. There were no shopping centers. There was a little mall of about two or three buildings down in the area where Market Basket is now located, just to the left of that. That was a couple of little wooden buildings that they called the shopping center. But this town was really small.

Y: You had an advertising campaign going on before you ever actually started the station.

D: Before we ever started the station and in order to put some money in our pocket to work with, we started a deal called Charter Advertiser. If you got in at that time, throughout the day we would mention your name with a little gimmick sound like so and so is a charter advertiser on KGOL, and we would do that about five times a day for all the various advertisers. It took probably all of fifteen seconds, but we did have, we probably had maybe sixty-five or a hundred people that bought in before we ever even got on the air.

Y: Was that a new idea in the valley?

D: I guess it was. It's one that I came up with, and I had to figure out some way to raise money, so I guess it was a new idea.

Y: You could have given me the idea that you tried to base the whole radio station around the concept of the desert. Can you talk about some of the ways in which you did that?

D: Yes. We'll start with the call letters again. The KGOL for the golden sound in the golden desert. If you ever notice at sunset the hills sort of have a purple color to them, so we decided to go into purple for our stationery, the white paper with the purple printing on it. I had a mobile unit that was done in two shades of purple with gold letters on it. And the little banners that would hang

on our microphones for live broadcasts, they were done in two shades of purple with gold letters. So we used two shades of purple and gold to go with the shades of the desert. And along with the Indian Wells Hotel broadcast, we did other broadcasts. In other words, we would go out on the spot; typical example, they had the lighting of a Christmas tree down at the corner of Highway 74 and 111. And the school children from I believe the Washington School participated in it singing carols and so forth, and we covered that broadcast live on the spot. And we did many broadcasts up at Shadow Mountain Club. Just little short broadcasts here and there, but whenever there was anything important, if there was a flood going on, and we did have a big flood one year, we covered it. We covered it in detail really because I had an engineer working for me who was a ham radio operator. So he could use his amateur radio equipment in his car and we had a receiver back at the station, so we would pick up his broadcast and then rebroadcast it on the air. So we were doing right on the air spots and telling where the roads were open and where they were closed and all the conditions. So we were first on that. And another first that we had in the desert, we

had an exclusive covering Palm Springs or Indio. No station in Palm Springs or Indio had this, the United International Press. And we could have broadcasts from any point in the world where anything was going on. In fact, when the astronauts were doing their splash-down, we were able to pick up a broadcast and carry from the time they made their re-entry right to splash-down. We got quite a bit of publicity on that one. Another deal we covered was when Lawrence was operating the Firecliff Lodge. She used to have Christmas in July. We covered that. We got national publicity out of it. The United International had me cut a little spot relating to it and it was on just about every radio station in the entire United States that covered, that had United International. So we did get some national publicity for Palm Desert even though the FCC didn't know where it was located.

Y: Probably put it on the map then. Would you talk a little bit about your partner, Eddie Howard. He was a Palm Desert resident.

D: Eddie Howard was a Palm Desert resident. Actually, in those days Indian Wells and Palm Desert was all the same thing. He really lived out in the Indian Wells area.

He loved to play golf. So his theory was that he was going to put the band away and give him a little more time for playing golf. And we used to get together and talk about the big bands and reminisce because he, of course, played such beautiful music such as "Careless," and "To Each His Own," which was a million disc hit or better. And that's the type music he was going to play when he would do a DJ show. So we were in complete agreement on music. And again, I said, it never happened.

Y: Had you been living in the area very long at that time?

D: I don't remember, to be honest with you. I don't recall.

Y: You must have had quite a following then.

D: Yes, we did. He did have a band at one time at the El Mirador Hotel. In fact it was the first time, I guess, in the history of the El Mirador Hotel that it had a sixteen-piece orchestra on a nightly basis. And they redid one of the rooms in there and called it, I guess, the Silver Palm Room. And that's where Eddie played.

Y: Did you have other employees at the time? Or was there just you? You said it was a real struggle.

D: Yes, we had about . . . wanted a girl Friday and three other DJ's, so we had to put in long hours. I would have to go down and do a DJ show in the morning and we'd go

out selling advertising in the afternoon. We'd either come back that evening and go over the books or do the maintenance of the stations and I was the only one that actually had the first-class FCC license. And you have to have that in order to be able to make any adjustments or repairs on the transmitter. Most of your announcers or DJ's usually had second or third-class licenses, and that did not authorize him to do any maintenance. So it was really quite a struggle. I said I guess I was just ten or fifteen years too soon and I was really happy to sell it and go back to the big

As we were mentioning, it was quite a struggle trying to do all the jobs and I think I figured out the number of hours I was putting it, I was probably making all of two dollars an hour. But, of course, I did have the title of running a radio station. But I decided I'd rather not have the title of a radio station and make some money. So I sold it and went back to Hollywood to work and became chief engineer for KFAC, which is the number one classical music station in the Los Angeles or Hollywood area. And I stayed with them until August of 1975, at which time they went nonunion. And until about the fourth time I decided I'd had all of Hollywood that I want, so I quit Hollywood for the fourth time and decided this time it's for good. And so far it has been. I went out to Hawaii to the island of Maui and became a tour guide. And people say, why Maui? Well, during World War II, Maui was the home base for the famous fighting fourth Marine division of the Marine Corps which is again the most famous of the divisions. And had a little bit of friendly feeling after being stationed there. I loved it and used to go back out and visit and I decided, well, what else? I don't want to go back into radio. I took the job as a tour

guide and enjoyed it very much. So about two, I guess three years, of it I decided to come back to our lovely Palm Desert. I have to admit that I also have five acres up in the high desert and it gets a little too hot for me here. I head for the high desert, a little place called Landers. It's again, if I were to build a radio station up there, I'm quite sure the FCC would write and say, where is Landers because it only had a population of about three thousand.

Y: How did you get into radio in the first place?

D: Well, when I was growing up, I wanted to be a pilot. That was my ambition, flying. And, of course, I'm now sixty-one so you can see I was born and raised during the depression years. The big depression, as they call it. And my dad worked for a coal company. He was a carpenter. We had our own home. My dad designed and built our home. Three children. I have two younger sisters and we had a very good life. We never had an awful lot, but we had a good life. We had plenty to eat, good clothes. My folks just couldn't afford to send me to flying school, so as a second choice I decided radio. I really wasn't too enthused. Flying kept going through my mind all the time, but I decided

I'd settle for radio. So I went away to Chicago, which in those days might seem like going to the other end of the world from Pennsylvania, where I was born and raised. And I graduated from and Radio School in Chicago in 1937. Came back to Pennsylvania, started my own radio business back there servicing radios and installing car radios and did some announcing at bingo parties. That's where I started my announcing career. And decided to move on to richer fields, I went to Philadelphia hoping maybe to get into radio down there which I found was impossible. And at that point I joined the Marine Corps. I went in the Marines, again hoping to become a pilot. In those days they had enlisted men as pilots, flying sergeants they call them. So one of the requirements was to go through radio school so you could become a pilot because they had no code. I went through radio school and having graduated from they kept me as an instructor. So I stayed as an instructor in radio school for twenty-six months, and finally got transferred into the new Fifth Marine Division which was just forming on the East Coast.

Y: Didn't stop there.

D: No. We went out to Camp Pendleton, and that's where the

division was really put together. And we were the first division to sail from the mainland here to battle. We sailed right from San Diego to the Marshall Islands. We were the first ones to ever do that. And then back to the island of Maui. So our division participated in the invasion of the Marshalls, Saipan, Tinian, and Iwo Jimo. John Wayne really wasn't with us.

Y: (chuckle) And you were a pilot as well at that time?

D: I became a pilot after the war, while I was still in the Marine Corps, but not a Marine Corps pilot. I was a private pilot. And went on, and during my flying career I guess I've owned five airplanes. The last one I had, I kept it Bermuda Dunes Airport, which when I first came to the desert was again nothing but a sand dune. And I had a friend in real estate, they took me out and said, gee, you better buy some land out here. There was a big stake in the ground and they said, this is where the clubhouse is going to be. I said, I'll never see it in my day. This was before they ever built the Bermuda Dunes.

Y: But the airport was there.

D: Nothing. That was nothing but sand.

Y: Oh.

D: So I said, it's quite interesting to think that I did see Bermuda Dunes develop and an airport built. Of course, it took the place of Desert Air Hotel for all those local pilots. However, today I'm not doing any flying because of a back injury and I doubt if I could pass the physical because of the injury to my back. I am not doing anything today, just taking life easy.

Y: Well, what happened then with radio? You went on with radio after that. Right? After the war.

D: Oh, yes. After the war I came out of the Marine Corps to the job in Washington, D.C. in radio. After a long winter there, that was enough. I headed for California and went into radio in Los Angeles. In fact, I went through the Don Martin School of Radio Arts. That's where I studied announcing, script writing, production, and directing. And that wasn't enough. I decided to go on through the Howard School of Engineering. I graduated from that. I take it back. I had an interruption in that. Had about another six months to go and I went back in the Marine Corps for a year. And I was stationed at Camp Pendleton in charge of all of the reserve communication west of the Mississippi. And after one year I went back to the Howard Hollywood Engineering School and completed it. And took

my first big job in Pasadena. It was a little radio station owned by a little old . . . no, not really. I worked for KWKW in Pasadena. After three months there, moved to KLAC in Los Angeles where I engineered for the Haines at the Reins Show, Al Jarvis Make Believe Ballroom and the Bob McLaughlin Show. And for eighteen months with KLAC. Moved on to CBS and became engineer for the Ralph Story Show. Ralph used to be the morning disc jockey on CBS. And of course, today he's the head bull in the newscast at five o'clock. He started out as a disc jockey with CBS. And while at CBS I did such shows as Bob Crosby Club 15 with the Andrew Sisters. And, oh, I don't recall them all. The American Airlines Show, Music Till Dawn. I was on that for awhile. Then I decided that was enough of Hollywood and that's when I came to the desert.

Y: You were telling me something about when you had to lay out the stations. You were measuring the or putting in the wire or something. I forget but it was a very complicated process that you had to do by hand. Do you know what I'm talking about?

D: Oh, yes. The wiring of the, around each tower.

Y: Yes.

D: A lot of people don't realize right around the base of every antenna, that's the big pole that's sticking up in the air, there's probably three thousand dollars worth of copper wire buried in the ground twelve inches deep. The wire will be about the size of a pencil and depending on the frequency of your station would depend on the length of that wire. Now around the base of each station each tower is roughly two hundred and seventy of those wires spaced at equal distance. So two towers, why, we probably had about four thousand dollars or five thousand dollars worth of copper wire buried in the ground.

Y: But you had to do it yourself.

D: Oh, yes. We did all of that, strung every one of those out. Had to go out and you'd take a compass and you'd take all the points of the compass and have somebody out at the other end with a straight line from you and drive a peg in the ground and you'd string the wire. You'd attach it to the base of the antenna to a great big copper strip maybe six inches wide. And all these wires attached to that great big copper strip which was wrapped around the base of the tower. And you'd string each one of them out. They had to go to a certain degree

of the compass all the way around that antenna.

Y: Was it difficult below stand?

D: Oh, it, you know, the below stand was still there. At the end of every day, why, you came home covered with sand in your teeth, in your ears, in your eyes and your hair. I tried to correct that. I threw some grass seed out there and tried to water it down, but that never was successful because the wind would blow it all away. But I did plant some tamarisk trees. I guess they're still growing out there. I haven't been out to the station since I saw it.

Y: Did you have to rent a jeep to that

D: Yes, we did. I had to have a jeep, and we put the compass up on the dashboard of the jeep and you'd drive a straight line. If you don't think that was a problem. They had a throw wheel drive jeep in order to cross this desert. And maybe five or six of the wires that we're talking about that were in the ground, they are known as radials. You may have to go out as far as ten miles making readings up. Now this was before the station actually was authorized to do any broadcasting. You were authorized test periods. And some of them could be done in the daytime, and others at night, after midnight. So you can imagine driving

across this desert after midnight with sidewinders and rattlesnakes and you name it. And every like, oh, about half mile you had to get out to make a reading and this showed you where your signal was actually going. And from it is what you would draw your pattern and plot it on a piece of graph paper. And that had to be submitted to the Federal Communications Commission. And the graphs that you drew should coincide with what you proposed when you submitted your application. And usually it works out. Comes out just about right. But we had to go . . . stay in the direction of Palm Springs, I had to go all the way to White Water on some of the radio. Oh, yes. We had to go as far as White Water. Now you figure, you pick up a compass course here in Palm Desert and spot it maybe every mile from here to White Water and, of course, going toward the mountain here was impossible because you could only go a certain distance. And, of course, the FCC took that into account and logged it. But many radios, we had to go out ten miles. We had to go all the way down almost to the Salt and Sea on a couple of radios.

Y: That's morethan ten miles.

D: Yes, but we had to go out that far on maybe two or three

to show that we were protecting in that direction because we had to protect the station in Mexico. So there's a lot of work to building a station. Took months and months. And I said, from the time I conceived the idea until the time I got on the air was approximately ten years.

Y: Anything else we haven't covered? You've covered everything I've got down here, once again.

D: That's it.

Y: Can you describe the station, what it was like at that point?

D: Not really.

Y: No. How big did you make it? One room?

D: Oh, no. That building, let's see, it was about thirty feet long . . . I'll tell you what. I can brainwash myself. I wipe those things out of my mind when I want to get rid of something. Twenty feet five. Then from that we divided it into sections, into an office.

Y: Had your sales office there?

D: Yes. Sales office. Everything was in the one building. The transmitter room, which was the transmitter room and the DJ room was all one room. Then we had another room for doing production work in it. We'd put commercials

together and things like that. I know what. I don't know whether it's still the same way or whether they've torn the partitions up. All the partitions that were put in were put in so that they could be taken out and moved around really. I really don't know.

Y: It was based on some ideas you had gathered from working in the industry?

D: Yes. I had a long time to plan it. I planned everything right to the square inch practically.

Y: Go ahead.

D: You were talking about when I first came out to Palm Desert. I decided if I was going to build a radio station here, well, I certainly should live in the area. And I'd been living in Palm Springs. So I started looking around and we ended up on Davis Road which was a new development. There were only a few homes up there at the time. In fact, the home that I'm now living in was not completed, and I decided that I liked the area very much. And I told my wife, hey, I just bought a house today. She said, what? I said, yes, come out and see it. So she came out and she took one look at it, and said, in this wilderness? She said, there's nothing out here. This was up on Davis Road. At the particular time, there were only about six

or seven new homes in the area, none of them completed. I was the first one to move in up there. And in trying to find the location for the radio station, as I mentioned earlier, it was really a major problem because nobody wanted antennas near property that they owned. So Hal Capp and Ted Smith were very much enthused about getting a radio station into Palm Desert. And they did a tremendous amount in helping me locate property, and I guess, I'm not really too sure, but I vaguely remember that it was Hal Capp who came up with the idea of Dr. Morrey had some property out on Cook Road. And he said, that's so far out, nobody will ever go out that direction. He said, you shouldn't have any problem at all getting antennas up out there. And it was true. It was considered almost out of Palm Desert.

Y: You were telling me that the man who was selling the homes in this area was very interested in making you a very good offer.

D: Oh, yes. In those days, he hadn't sold any homes up in there. Nothing was signed. So when I mentioned I was going to build a radio station there, he said, oh, boy, get a man in here and I can say now the owner of the new radio station just bought this house, so he took the home

I had in Palm Desert or Palm Springs in on the trade-in. So I didn't have to put any money down. And I'll admit I only paid nineteen thousand five hundred for this place, and taxes and interest included my payments were a hundred and a quarter a month. Today I've been offered a hundred and sixty thousand for it. So again that indicates the growth of Palm Desert.

Y: And this is probably part of Palm Desert Highlands?

D: I don't remember whether it was considered Palm Desert Highlands in those days or not. I really don't know. Again it was out so far in the wilderness that they didn't consider it to be in Palm Desert. Remember, you got to pass the Shadow Mountain Club you're out of town. That was the end of the town. Really it was. The Shadow Mountain Club was on the fringe of the town.

Y: You really were out in the wilderness.

D: Yes. I guess another name I should really mention in here, a man who was somewhat helpful to me, Clay Sterns. He was an oldtime vaudeville actor and when he found out I was going to put a radio station in the area, he was quite enthused about it. So he offered a helping hand, he was in real estate, he also offered a helping hand in trying to locate property for me. I'll say in the days

I came here everybody seemed enthused about the fact that we were going to get a radio station in Palm Desert. And everybody tried to help. They really did. There was great cooperation among the people here in those times. And everybody knew everybody in the town, all three thousand.